Environmental Threat to Western Ghats

5063. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Western Ghats are among the 25 most species-rich and environmentally threatened area of the world, according to a report of the Population Action International; and

(b) if so, what steps Government are taking to protect this area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Several steps have been taken by the Government to protect the species-richness of Western Ghats. A separate Western Ghat Development Programme was launched by the Government of India in the beginning of the Fifth Five year Plan with the objectives of eco-preservation, eco-restoration and eco-development. Protection, conservation and regeneration efforts have been strengthened under the Bio-sphere Reserve programme with the coming into being of the Nilgiri Bio-sphere Reserve spread over the States of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Besides, over 80 National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries further contribute to protection and conservation of species-richness and bio-diversity of the area. Assistance is being provided to the State Governments for taking up eco-development around the protected areas. Financial assistance is also being provided to Non-Governmental Organisations and Voluntary Agencies for afforestation and tree plantation. Other measures include survey and inventorisation of the floral and faunal resources, funding of research projects, control of illegal trade in wildlife and its products and awareness generation for conservation.

Funds for plantation programme in Meghalaya

5064. SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of funds allocated by Government for the plantation programme in Meghalaya during each of the last five years; and

(b) the details of steps being taken by Government with regard to actually utilising the above funds during this period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Central assistance